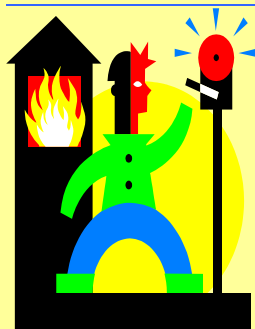




FROM THE DESK OF THE DDSN MEDICAL CONSULTANT

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:



Written by:

Graeme Johnson, M.D.
MEDICAL CONSULTANT

SCDDSN

3440 Harden Street Ext.

P.O. Box 4706

Columbia, SC 29240

PHONE:

(803) 898-9808

FAX:

(803) 898-9656

EMAIL:

gjohnson@ddsn.state.sc.us

EXTRANET:

<http://web.ddsn.sc.gov>



BURNS AND FIRE SAFETY

One of our most important responsibilities as caregivers is maintaining the safety of our consumers. We need to be aware of safety risks, recognize problems, plan to meet them and follow through where needed. We need to train our consumers and ourselves in safe ways of doing things and in emergency procedures that can be used if danger is present.

One injury we need to watch for is burns. At present in winter, we may not have sunburn to worry about but the risks of burns from electrical, kitchen, and heating appliances are increased. We need to pay attention to them and assist our consumers to be safe by our actions and by training them in good safety habits.

Risks in the Festive Season

Please work thoughtfully to avoid increased risks of fires and burns in the festive season. Use only flameproof decorations. Live trees with root balls need to be watered well so they do not dry out and become a fire risk. Live cut trees need to be well watered too and should be flame treated in many settings. Check for UL rating of flame retardant if you use artificial trees and decorations. Please be careful with lights and any extension cords you may use (not too hot; not too many lights on one cord – if cord feels hot, do not continue to use). Candles are a very big risk and are best not used. **Never** put candles on a tree and **never** leave them unattended.



FIRE SAFETY

With cold weather, there are also risks from our heating equipment. Please check warnings on all space heaters. Do not have items that can catch on fire (e.g., clothes, curtains) close to space heaters or fireplaces (do not drape washing to dry over heaters). Have screens or glass doors in front of the fireplaces and be careful when putting logs onto the fire.

Smoking

Smoking is a huge fire danger. Smokers must follow rules as to where they should smoke and we must learn and use safe ways of disposing of the ashes and butts if smoking is allowed. Overall for safety and health, smoking should not be part of our activities. Check your agencies' policies.

Emergency Procedures

We must have our emergency procedures up to date, practiced, and easily used. Please make sure smoke alarms are in place and their batteries charged. Practice the house escape plan including the correct place to meet after leaving so that you can check on everyone. Train so that everyone will get out and report safely. ***Remember the fire safety rules,*** get out (do not waste time saving property), and leave immediately. Once out, stay out and account for everyone.

Burns

Burns can occur in fires but also with hot liquids. Please monitor shower water temperatures and be wary in baths. Pots on the stove can spill boiling water – keep handles pointed in. Sunlight can cause sunburn. We need to watch for electrical burns (cover outlets where there are children). Some chemicals (caustics and acids in particular) need care to avoid burns. Burns are injuries to the skin and underlying tissues caused by heat, fire, radiation, sunlight, electricity, or chemicals.



Superficial or First Degree Burns – are red and painful. They may swell and be pale and the skin may peel in 1-3 days. They only affect the top layers of the skin (minor sunburn for example) and heal in 3-6 days.

Partial Thickness or Second Degree Burns – affect more layers of the skin causing pain and blisters and take a few days to a month to heal depending on depth.

Full Thickness or Third Degree Burns – damages all layers of the skin and may look white or charred. Most often nerves are damaged and there may be little pain in the area. These areas often need a skin graft (a thin

layer of skin cut from unburned areas of skin and put on the burned area). These need long-term medical and rehabilitation care.

First Aid for Burns

Please do not further damage the skin by putting butter, oil, ice, or ice water on the burned area.

- Superficial Burns – redness, no blisters:
 - Soak in cool water immediately;
 - Apply cream – aloe vera, antibiotic ointment;
 - May protect with dry gauze dressing; and,
 - To relieve pain, use acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol).
 - Special Features – if large area (face, hands, feet, or genitals) seek medical help right away.
- Partial Thickness Burns – red, pain, blisters:
 - Soak in cool water – 15 minutes;
 - Small areas – apply cool, clean wet clothes to area daily;
 - Apply antibiotic or skin cream from doctor;
 - Pain relief – Tylenol or prescription medication;
 - Cover with non-stick dressing (e.g., Telfa), change daily, wash hands first, clean area gently, re-apply cream and cover (some small areas may not need a cover during the day).
 - Special Features – if areas as above, get medical advice, do not break blisters (increases risk of infection), watch for infection (increasing pain, heat, redness, or pus), avoid scratching (healing skin itches), and area may be sensitive to sunlight for up to 12 months.
- Full Thickness Burns – deep tissue damage, white area, no blisters, probably not painful.
 - Get to doctor or hospital right away;
 - Do not remove clothing stuck to the wound;
 - Do not soak in water;
 - May remove surrounding clothes or jewelry.
- Electrical Burns – beware when moving person, turn off electricity. Get medical help immediately (may have internal or deep tissues injury).
- Chemical Burns – wash with lots of water and do not put anything on the burn.
- Sunburn – treat as for superficial (no blisters) or partial thickness burn (blisters). Prevention is important – cover up, reduce exposure is best.



In All Cases of Burns:

Please check back as to why the burn occurred.

Follow your agency's policy to investigate, evaluate, and plan so that we prevent it from happening again. This may often involve us in training or retraining ourselves and our consumer in safety measures.
Be Alert and Safe.

